

## **NEW ZEALAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICE**

### **Introduction**

New Zealand officially started Environmental Choice New Zealand, a voluntary seal-of-approval program, on July 10, 1990. The stated objectives of the program are: to provide an incentive for manufacturers and importers to reduce the environmental impacts of products sold in New Zealand; to recognize the genuine actions by companies to reduce the adverse environmental impacts of their products; to provide a clear, credible and independent guide to consumers wishing to take account of environmental factors in their purchase decisions; to encourage consumers to purchase goods that have lower environmental impacts; and, ultimately, to improve the quality of the environment and to encourage the sustainable management of resources. Product category criteria have been published for 18 product categories. They are all currently under review. Revised criteria are expected to be published toward the end of 1997.

### **Recent Changes**

There has been a significant change in the organizational structure of New Zealand's environmental labeling program. On July 1, 1997, Telarc (the Testing Laboratory Registration Council, or the Council) New Zealand, the organizational body administering the environmental labeling program, was restructured. A new separate company with its own Board of Directors, Telarc Limited, was established to provide all certification services. The accreditation activities are now operating under a new trading name, International Accreditation New Zealand.

### **Program Summary**

Environmental Choice New Zealand is administered by the Testing Laboratory Registration Council (the Council) under a formal memorandum of agreement with the Minister for the Environment. The Council's operational unit, International Accreditation New Zealand, is the New Zealand accreditation authority for laboratories and inspection bodies, and manages Environmental Choice New Zealand. The Council is a statutory body which operates independently on a user-paid, non-profit basis.

The Environmental Choice Management Advisory Committee (ECMAC) is an independent committee appointed to advise the Council on the operation of the program. ECMAC includes individuals appointed to provide broad representation from manufacturing, retailing, packaging, environmental, academic, and consumer interests. ECMAC also includes a representative from the Ministry for the Environment.

ECMAC is responsible for choosing suitable product categories for Environmental Choice New Zealand. Once ECMAC has decided upon a product category, it sets up a Task Group specific to that product category to develop criteria. After the Task Group has completed a draft of the criteria specifications, ECMAC releases the document for public comment. The public comment period

lasts for at least 60 days. The Task Group's responses to these comments are not made available to the public; only the background papers on product specification developments are made accessible to the public. The Task Group then takes these comments and revises the Specification, after which the document is referred to ECMAC. ECMAC, in turn, recommends the requirements to the Council. The Council then decides whether to approve the specification for publication.

Product suppliers, which may include manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, and retailers, may apply for a license to use the Environmental Choice New Zealand label as soon as a product category specification has been published. A life-cycle approach is used to analyze whether the product satisfies the criteria. Environmental Choice New Zealand may require product testing performed by an accredited laboratory, and/or examination of the relevant manufacturing records to verify that a product meets the product category specification. If the Environmental Choice assessor is satisfied that a particular product complies with the requirements, the applicant is granted a license to use the program's label. Applicants pay an application fee (\$1000), and, if a product is accepted, an annual licensing fee as well. Licensing fees are calculated on a sliding scale depending on the sales volume for that product, and run between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

License holders are subject to payment of fees and continued compliance, which is monitored by Environmental Choice New Zealand throughout the period. Licenses are renewed annually. Environmental Choice New Zealand gives license holders notice before revising product category specifications and 12 months, if necessary, to adjust to new requirements. As of January 1997, three companies have been granted licences. These licenses cover over 50 separate paint and carpet products.

### **Program Methodology**

ECMAC is responsible for choosing suitable product categories for Environmental Choice New Zealand. A Task Group is then set up by ECMAC for each product category to develop criteria. In choosing product categories, the environmental impacts of the potential categories, stakeholder votes and advice from ECMAC, and suggestions from producers are all taken into account. A life cycle approach is used to analyze whether the product satisfies the criteria, which takes into account every stage of the product's life cycle, from "cradle-to-grave." Factors such as raw material use, product uses, recyclability, potential for reuse, product ingredients, and environmental performance of the production process are all taken into consideration. Similar to other environmental labeling programs, Environmental Choice New Zealand also uses literature, other programs' LCAs, independent testing and studies, and participating producer's suggestions when developing their product criteria. Finally, Environmental Choice New Zealand uses generic environmental impact assessments in developing its criteria. It does not, however, follow SETAC guidelines in its LCA.

## Other Information

Because Environmental Choice New Zealand uses a sliding scale of licensing fees, it is able to accommodate the needs of small and medium sized businesses.

In setting up Environmental Choice New Zealand, the government wanted to ensure that the program be credible, practical, independent, nonpartisan, and comparable to other programs such as Canada's Environmental Choice Program. To harmonize and coordinate with other programs, Environmental Choice New Zealand has aligned its procedures with the requirements of: the ISO 14020 and ISO 14024 guidelines; the Global Ecolabeling Network guidelines; and the World Trade Organization, Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement, Code of Practice. Product criteria developed by other programs are considered when Environmental Choice New Zealand product specification documents are prepared. Additionally, Environmental Choice New Zealand is in the process of exploring specific opportunities to recognize local conditions, such as regulatory requirements, affecting other labeling programs as well as products manufactured outside New Zealand.

Environmental Choice New Zealand reports that it has not had any trade conflicts to date.

## References

Environmental Choice New Zealand. *Published Specifications*. July 1997.

Environmental Choice New Zealand. *Schedule of Fees - 1997/8*.

Heinke, Gary W. et. al. *Final Report: Development of an Eco-label Certification Programme for Hong Kong/ RC96-19*. Hong Kong: Research Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, June 1996.

Russ, Marje. International Accreditation New Zealand. Personal Communication with Abt Associates. September 1997.

## Product Categories (number of awarded products in parentheses)

### *Final Categories*

- Zinc air batteries
- Carbon zinc batteries
- Lead acid batteries
- Recycled plastic products
- Laundry detergents
- Machine dishwashing detergents
- Hand dishwashing detergents
- Re-refined lubricating oil

Paints (41)  
Fine papers  
Newsprint and derived products  
Sanitary paper products  
Moulded paper products from recycled paper  
Macerated paper products from recycled paper  
Recycled papers  
Wool pile carpets (14)  
Wool-rich pile carpets